

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 TRSE-00

L-03 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 EB-07 FRB-03 AID-05 PRS-01

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FM AMEMBASSY LIMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1395

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 7375

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, PE

SUBJECT: COMMENTS FROM FONOFF AND U.S. NEWSMEN RE. SOVIET

MILITARY AIRCRAFT

REF: LIMA 7330 (NOTAL)

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH CHARGE AUGUST 12, FONOFF HEAD OF AMERICAN DEPARTMENT JAIME ALVAREZ CALDERON ASKED WHETHER THE GOP IS BUYING SOVIET AIRCRAFT. WHEN CHARGE SAID HE HAD HEARD REPORTS AND RUMORS BUT FRANKLY DID NOT KNOW, ALVAREZ CALDERON LISTED ALL THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REASONS WHY SUCH A PURCHASE WOULD BE UNWISE. CHARGE AGREED WITH THIS RECITAL.

2. U.S. REPORTER TELLS US THAT FONMIN DUCKED A QUESTION ON POSSIBLE PURCHASE OF SOVIET AIRCRAFT DURING A RECENT MEETING WITH THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS HERE. WE UNDERSTAND DE LA PUENTE ALSO AVOIDED ANSWERING A SIMILAR QUESTION POSED BY THE PRESS TO HIM IN BUENOS AIRES.

3. AP LIMA BUREAU CHIEF TOLD EMBOFF AUGUST 12 THAT SOVIET PURCHASE STORY WAS WRITTEN WEEKS AGO BY AP'S BUENOS AIRES BUREAU CHIEF INDEPENDENTLY OF INFORMATION DEVELOPED IN LIMA BY NEWS
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AGENCIES. STORY HAS APPARENTLY BEEN LYING DORMANT IN NEW YORK

FOR SOME TIME. SPECULATION AMONG NEWSMEN IS THAT THE STORY MAY HAVE BEEN PLANTED IN EARLY JULY BY CONSERVATIVE PERUVIAN GENERALS (PERHAPS GENERAL BOBBIO) IN AN EFFORT TO EMBARRASS THEN-PRIME MINISTER FERNANDEZ MALDONADO. OTHERS FEEL THAT CHILEANS, U.S. (TO DISCOURAGE PURCHASE BEFORE IT BECOMES FINAL), OR EVEN THE RUSSIANS MAY HAVE LEAKED THE STORY.

4. COMMENT: FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS AND PERHAPS OTHER CIVILIAN ELEMENTS IN GOP ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF ANOTHER MAJOR ARMS PURCHASE FROM THE SOVIET UNION AT THIS TIME. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE PERUVIAN MILITARY ARE KEEPING THIS POSSIBLE PURCHASE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE TO THEMSELVES ALONE. CONTINUED REFUSAL OF GOP OFFICIALS TO COMMENT ON PRESS REPORTS IS ITSELF SIGNIFICANT AND RELATES TO EXTREME SENSITIVITY WITH WHICH THE MILGOV IS HANDLING THE PURCHASE QUESTION.
SMITH

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